

**MEETING MINUTES  
OF THE SPECIAL JOINT MEETING  
OF THE UNION TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE  
AND THE TOWNSHIP BOARD OF EDUCATION  
May 14, 2008**

**CALL TO ORDER**

Deputy Mayor Dziubek called the Special Joint Meeting of the Union Township Committee and the Board of Education to order at 7:00 p.m. The Sunshine Statement was read.

**FLAG SALUTE**

**ROLL CALL**

Committee Members Present: Mr. Severino, Mr. Bischoff, Mrs. Dziubek. Absent: Frank Mazza, Rob Haynes

Others Present: Atty. J. Peter Jost, Ella Mr. Ruta, Township Clerk

Present from the Union Twp. Board of Education: John Corcoran, Dennis Glacken, Page Stiger, Elizabeth Stothoff, James Teipel, Karen Wisnosky, Michael Sroka. Absent: Peter Ashey, Patrick McCluskey.

**PURPOSE OF THE MEETING:**

a. Discussion of 2008-2009 Defeated Local School Budget

Atty. Jost read N.J.S.A Statutes 18A; 22-37 pertaining to the defeated local school budget.

Mrs. Dziubek welcomed everybody present for the meeting. She provided a few specifics regarding this year's municipal budget. One of them was municipal aid from the State cut by \$111,000.00. The municipality did not have a choice in the matter. The municipal budget would have to be balanced without that money. She added that The Township Committee wants to make sure that the taxpayer's money is spent well and wisely. Mrs. Dziubek also said that every penny in tax increase translates to \$65,000.00.

She thanked the Board of Ed. for providing necessary information in order for the Committee to make an informed decision concerning local school budget that would be satisfactory to all.

Mr. Sroka gave an overview of the local school budget and explained time lines regarding it. He pointed out that every line item in the 2008-2009 budget had been scrutinized from top to bottom. Mr. Sroka clarified and explained some of them. He said that unfortunately the cost of living allowance went up and along with that, everything else goes up. He said with all the increases the Union Twp. district has the lowest administrative costs in the County and has the lowest cost per pupil. The proposed budget is at about 4% higher this year. Mr. Sroka added that sadly the voter turn out at the election was so poor that it does not reflect the voice of the residents. He asked that the amount to be cut is symbolic or not at all. He stressed the importance of moving on and getting back to education. Mr. Sroka asked that the public present for the meeting have the opportunity to speak tonight.

Mr. Severino made a motion to open the meeting for Public Comments. Mr. Bischoff seconded the motion. Vote – Ayes: Mr. Severino, Mr. Bischoff, Mrs. Dziubek. Motion carried.

Mrs. Dziubek stated that public comments are welcome, but due to the large group of residents present, they will be limited to two minutes each.

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**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

The following residents spoke in favor of keeping the school budget as presented. Most of them said that a reason to move into Union Township was the small size of the classes, excellent education, and small town atmosphere and community:

Lisa Coster, 6 Woods Edge Dr., president of PTA, Kim Komarek, 18 Woolf's Farm Road, past PTA president, Mrs. Marak, 8 Deer Run Road, Jeff Bruno, 12 Grove Farm Road, Kathy Lang, 42 Grove Farm Road, Darlene Johnston, school teacher, Ellen Smizer, school teacher.

Mr. Bischoff made a motion to close the Public Comment section of the meeting. Mr. Severino seconded the motion. Vote – Ayes: Mr. Severino, Mr. Bischoff, Mrs. Dziubek. Motion carried.

Mr. Severino said that he had contacted Mr. Sroka and asked him questions he needed answered. Mr. Sroka answered all his questions to his satisfaction.

Mr. Severino asked the Board if they could find any areas in the budget to make cuts.

Mr. Sroka said that after the budget failed it was examined again line by line. There was no part of the budget where major deductions could be made.

To answer the public request, Mr. Bischoff said that as a grandfather of a special needs child/grandson he understands the value and the need to keep all school programs. He stated that he supports the obligation to educate future generations and costs, both personal and monetary associated with fulfilling that obligation. He reiterated what was said before that the Township had gotten another unfounded mandate from the State that the \$111,000.00 was taken from our budget and has to be raised by taxation. After the amount was known, the Committee went through the budget that was already trimmed and cut it by another 5%. The cuts included reduction in the staff, the hours of the employees and other unnecessary things. The Regional High School Budget was cut by one million dollars. He went on to say that everybody is pulling together making an effort to make the best out of a very difficult situation. As the Committee, Mr. Bischoff said they represent more than just the parents of the school children. The Committee represents people who do not have children, singles, senior citizens on fixed incomes, etc. Raising taxes is a very painful thing for them and in recent years, we have lost residents who no longer could afford taxes to maintain our system.

Having said that, Mr. Bischoff asked Mr. Sroka a few specific questions related to the failed school budget. Why the line item called "Excess Interest" in the amount of \$26,000.00 was not budgeted?, Second question concerns Energy Credits from last year in the total of about \$20,000.00 that is not accounted for in the proposed budget?, Next one is why an Excess Fund Balance that is budgeted at \$75,000.00, which is above the \$250,000.00 allowable? . Mr. Sroka answered and explained all questions asked by Mr. Bischoff to the best of his knowledge and ability.

Mrs. Dziubek asked the number of children enrolled in schools. Mr. Sroka stated that it is at 605 and the proposed budget had been based on that number.

Mrs. Dziubek made the public aware of the new rules for affordable housing that each municipality in the State has to comply with and its impact on the future regarding the community and education system. She emphasized that it is in everyone's best interest to get together and do something while we still have that option.

Mr. Bischoff stated that the Township Committee is very active in opposing the proposed COAH regulations. Another subject that he would like Township residents to be aware of are the charges for

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services provided by the State Police.

Mr. Bender, Superintendent of Local Schools, spoke of shared services regarding schools, fixed costs of running schools, maintenance of aging schools etc.

Mr. Severino said that he understands the difficulty in the preparation of the school budget because he himself was on the School Board in the past. He would like to recommend minimal or no cuts to this year's school budget.

Mr. Severino proposed to cut the 2008-2009 school budget by \$50.00.

Atty. Jost stated that even a minimal cut like that has to specify which line item it is coming from.

Mr. Severino suggested that it comes out of the Acct 11-190-100-610-000-004 Lockers.

The following resolution was presented for adoption:

**RESOLUTION 2008-92**

**RESOLUTION OF THE TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE OF THE TOWNSHIP  
OF UNION, HUNTERDON COUNTY, NEW JERSEY,  
DETERMINING AND CERTIFYING AMOUNTS TO BE RAISED  
FOR SCHOOL TAXES FOR THE 2008-2009 SCHOOL YEAR OF  
THE UNION TOWNSHIP SCHOOL DISTRICT**

**WHEREAS**, in the 2008 annual school election in the Township of Union the majority of the voters rejected the amounts proposed in the Budget for the Union Township School District for the school year 2008 for the General Fund; and

**WHEREAS**, the Township Committee, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:22-37, after consultation with the Board of Education of the Union Township School District, has determined the amounts which in the judgement of the Township Committee are necessary to be appropriated for each item appearing in such Budget to provide a thorough and efficient system of school in the district; and

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** by the Township Committee of the Township of Union that it hereby certifies to the Hunterdon County Board of Taxation the total of the amounts so determined to be necessary to be raised by taxes for the 2008-2009 school year for the Union Township School District, and said amounts to be raised are considered by the Township Committee to be sufficient to provide for a thorough and efficient educational system, are as follows:

General Fund:

- |    |  |                 |
|----|--|-----------------|
| a. | Original tax levy on ballot<br>for base budget:                                    | \$ 7,814,912.00 |
| b. | Amount of reduction:   | \$ 50.00        |
| c. | Amount of tax levy being certified<br>by the Township Committee for base<br>budget | \$ 7,814,862.00 |

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**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the underlying determinations and supporting reasons of the Township Committee for its reduction in the Union Township School Budget for 2008-2009 and the decrease in the tax levy are attached hereto as Schedule "A";

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that certified copies of this Resolution be forwarded no later than May 19, 2008 to:

- a. The Union Township Board of Education
- b. The Hunterdon County Board of Taxation
- c. The Union Township Tax Assessor
- d. The Hunterdon County Superintendent of Schools (2 copies)

**SCHEDULE A**

Union Township School Budget – Reduction Recommended

Acct 11-190-100-610-000-004 Lockers	\$50.00
Total Reduction	<hr/> \$50.00

Mr. Severino made a motion to adopt above resolution. Mr. Bischoff seconded the motion. Vote – Ayes: Mr. Severino, Mrs. Dziubek. Abstained: Mr. Bischoff. Motion carried.

Mr. Sroka thanked the Township Committee for working diligently on reaching a satisfactory resolution to the defeated school budget.

Township Committee Members adjourned the Joint Committee/Board of Education meeting at about 8:20 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Ella M. Ruta, RMC  
Municipal Clerk